

CD 2006--113

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO FACULTY OF MUSIC



2006-2007 SEASON

WHERE GREAT MINDS MEET GREAT MUSIC

Friday, December 8, 2006
7:30 pm. MacMillan Theatre

University of Toronto Faculty of Music
Presents

University of Toronto Symphony Orchestra
Raffi Armenian, conductor

PROGRAM

Ludwig van Beethoven
(1770 - 1827)

Coriolan Overture, Op. 62

Keith Reid, graduate student conductor

Aleksandr K. Glazunov
(1865 - 1936)

**Concerto in E-flat for Alto Saxophone
and String Orchestra, Op. 109**

Tristan De Borba, saxophone

INTERMISSION

Paul Hindemith
(1895 - 1963)

Mathis der Maler Symphony

Engelkonzert

Grablegung

Versuchung Des Heiligen Antonius

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Program Notes

Coriolan Overture, Op. 62

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN (1770-1827)

Beethoven composed the *Coriolan Overture* in 1807 on the occasion of the revival of the Austrian poet and playwright Heinrich von Collin's tragedy, first staged in 1802. Collin's *Trauerspiel*, a German dramatic genre characterized by extreme brutality and suffering, is based on the story of the Roman general Coriolanus as related by Plutarch. According to the legend, after capturing the Volscian city of Corioli, Coriolanus is shunned by Rome. To avenge himself, he joins forces with his former enemy, the Volscians, to attack Rome. As he is about to destroy Rome, his mother, Volumnia, persuades him to relent. He now finds himself in an untenable position and—in Collin's version at least—commits suicide. (Collin apparently did not know Shakespeare's version of the same story, *Coriolanus*, in which the Volscians kill the hero for betraying them.)

In Beethoven's musical retelling, many commentators have interpreted the opening C minor chords as the expression of Coriolanus's rage. According to this reading, the contrasting major theme corresponds to Volumnia's pleas for peace, and the disintegrating cello in the coda, to his death. "This is horror music," writes Richard Taruskin, "and the horror is conveyed as much by what does not happen, by what is deliberately withheld, as by anything that actually occurs. The trajectory from C minor to C major is cut off as palpably as the Hero's life." Unlike the famous Fifth Symphony, which also begins in C minor but concludes in celebratory C major, the *Coriolan Overture* remains tragic until the very end, allowing the listener to share in the hero's gloomy fate.

The Overture was first performed in concert in March 1807, a month before the revival of the play itself. Although Collin's play has since been forgotten, Beethoven's musical dramatization has endured as a staple of the concert

repertory. The *Coriolan* is not alone in this regard; the separation of the overture from the stage work it was intended to introduce began with Handel and continued with Mozart. But it was at this time that the overture as a genre, led by the *Coriolan*, made its transition to an independent concert piece, a tradition that flourished in the Romantic period until it was overtaken by the more ambitious ideals of the symphonic poem as conceived by Liszt.

Concerto in E-flat for Alto Saxophone and String Orchestra, Op. 109

ALEKSANDR GLAZUNOV (1865-1936)

Glazunov's early musical training in St. Petersburg took place at the tail end of the groundbreaking nationalist movement led by The Five, a group of self-taught composers (Balakirev, Borodin, Cui, Mussorgsky and Rimsky-Korsakov) who sought to create a Russian school of composition. As a teenager, Glazunov studied privately with one of The Five, Rimsky-Korsakov, and according to the elder master, improved "not from day to day but from hour to hour." After the death of Borodin in 1887, Glazunov joined forces with his former teacher, Rimsky-Korsakov, to complete and edit Borodin's unfinished works. Glazunov's prodigious talents were put to good use: he wrote down from memory the overture to the opera *Prince Igor* by recalling Borodin's performance of it on the piano.

His fame as a composer steadily growing, Glazunov was appointed a professor at the St. Petersburg Conservatory in 1899. In April of the revolutionary year of 1905, he resigned his post to protest the dismissal of Rimsky-Korsakov, who had supported the striking students. But in December he returned after the demands of the left-leaning professors had been met, and was immediately elected director of the Conservatory, a post he held for nearly 25 years.

Glazunov's best-known works, includ-

ing his violin concerto (1904) and Eighth Symphony (1906), date from this period. Throughout his tenure at the Conservatory, he worked tirelessly to improve the curriculum and to continually raise the school's standards. On account of his devotion to music and his generosity towards his students (he was particularly supportive of the young Shostakovich), he became much loved by both his peers and students.

Although he developed a good relationship with the authorities after the 1917 revolution, in 1928 he left for Europe, and after several years of touring, settled in Paris in 1932. It was in Paris, in 1934, that he composed his concerto for alto saxophone at the request of the German-born American saxophone virtuoso Sigurd Rascher. With its frequent, though subtle, changes in tempo, this one-movement episodic concerto is restrained in expression and short in duration. A cadenza divides the work into about two equal parts; the solo musings of the saxophone spark a livelier atmosphere in the second half in which a glittering fugato passage and teasing two-against-three rhythms are highlights.

"The younger composers (Prokofiev, Shostakovich) abandoned him as old-fashioned," observed Russian and Soviet music scholar Boris Schwarz. "But he remains a composer of imposing stature and a stabilizing influence in a time of transition and turmoil." In all periods, there are artists who chart new paths and others who consolidate past accomplishments. Glazunov made his contribution as a leading member of the latter camp.

Mathis the Painter Symphony

PAUL HINDEMITH (1895-1963)

Although Hindemith had at first rejected the idea of an opera about the German painter Mathis Grünewald (c.1475-1528), in June 1933, five months after Hitler became Chancellor of Germany, he had a change of heart and dropped everything

to work on *Mathis der Maler* (Mathis the Painter), a project that would consume all of his energies until its completion two years later in July 1935. It took the time it did not just because of its length (three and a quarter hours) but also because Hindemith decided to write the libretto himself.

Shortly after beginning work on the opera, Wilhelm Furtwängler, conductor of the Berlin Philharmonic, asked Hindemith for a new orchestral piece to be performed that winter. The composer used the opportunity to flesh out music for his opera and presented Furtwängler with a three-movement symphony.

The premiere in March 1934 was a big success and plans were made to produce the opera the following season. But precisely because of its success, the Nazi regime launched a campaign to ban Hindemith's music in order to punish the highly regarded composer for his political opposition to the regime, his liberal views and his association with Jews (who included his wife). By November the Nazis had succeeded in enforcing a near total boycott on performances of Hindemith's music. As a result, the opera was not premiered until 1938—in Zurich.

Grünewald's most famous paintings are located in the altar of the chapel in a monastery in Isenheim, near Colmar in France. The scenes depicted by the four panels that make up the altarpiece are illustrated in the opera by preludes and interludes. In the symphony, the first two movements each depict one panel while the finale combines the two others.

The symphony's first movement, *Engelkonzert* (Concert of Angels), is the prelude to the opera and illustrates three angels singing and playing to the virgin and child. The angels' song, introduced by the trombones, is an eight-bar slow-moving folk melody with which Hindemith combines several other themes in a movement rich in contrapuntal invention and modal harmonies.

The slow and solemn second movement, *Grablegung* (Entombment), depicts

Christ being laid in the sepulchre. It begins intimately, with flute and oboe solos, before building to a central stately climax, after which the music recedes, but now with warmer hues. In the opera, this

music is used as an interlude in the final scene as a prayer for the soul of Regina (daughter of the peasant rebellion's leader), and returns at the very end, slightly varied, as a prayer for Mathis himself.

The finale is the only movement not taken directly from the opera. Entitled *Versuchung des Heiligen Antonius* (Temptation of St. Anthony), its main section corresponds to St. Anthony being tormented by demons (the climax of the opera) while the coda depicts St. Paul showing St. Anthony his true path.

In the opera, set during the 1524 Peasants' Revolt, Mathis abandons his art to support the rebels' cause against their Catholic oppressors. After the rebels raze a village, an act of brutality that Mathis denounces, they are massacred by Catholic troops. The Cardinal, however, eventually makes peace with the Lutherans; and Mathis is tormented by visions to return to painting.

The parallels between Mathis's struggle and that of Hindemith, an artist living through equally turbulent times, are easy to spot. Ian Kemp, for instance, argues that the composer "used the life of Grünewald to dramatize his personal predicament and, eventually, to testify to a hard-won personal integrity: however much an artist tries to appease his moral and social conscience he will remain impotent unless he nourishes his one strength, his creative gifts." Hindemith did not at first recognize the threat posed by rise of Hitler and believed he could wait out the regime. In the face of state censorship and the very real pressure to abandon his profession, he remained devoted to his calling. Four months after the opera's 1938 premiere in Zurich, he realized there could be no compromise with the Nazis and he emigrated to Switzerland. In 1940 he moved to the United States where he became a professor at Yale, and in 1946, an American citizen.

Notes © 2006 by Robert Rival, doctoral candidate in composition in the Faculty of Music. www.robertrival.com

Biographies

Maestro **Raffi Armenian** graduated from the piano performance class of Bruno Feidhofer at the Academy of Music in Vienna, Austria. He further studied at Imperial College, University of London, England, before completing his studies at the Vienna Academy of Music with Hans Swarowsky (orchestral conducting), Rheinhold Schmid (choral conducting) and Alfred Uhl (composition). He also took private voice lessons with Ferdinand Grossmann.

In 1969 Raffi Armenian immigrated to Canada, where he became Artistic Director of the Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony for 22 years. The Raffi Armenian Theatre in Kitchener, which he helped to design, is considered one of the best performance spaces in North America, both for its acoustics

and its design features. In 1974, as Music Director of the Stratford Festival, he founded the Canadian Chamber Ensemble, which achieved international recognition with tours in North and South America, and Europe.

Raffi Armenian has guest conducted all of the major orchestras in Canada, as well as in Belgium, Italy, the United States, and the Jeunesses Musicales World Youth Orchestra. Equally at home on the operatic podium, he has conducted productions in Toronto, Montreal, Detroit, Columbus and Indiana, in a vast repertoire, including Berg's *Wozzeck* for the Canadian Opera Company, Toronto, and Stravinsky's *Rake's Progress*. From 1982 to 1985 he was Artistic Director of the Opera Studio of Opera de Montreal. In 1989, he conducted the final public

appearance of the great Canadian tenor Jon Vickers, in a concert performance of Wagner's *Parsifal*. In March 2006, he led the University of Toronto Opera Division in four performances of *The Marriage of Figaro* by Mozart.

Raffi Armenian's work has received countless honors including the Canadian Grand Prix du Disque for *Serenades*, and an Emmy Award nomination for the TV performance of Menotti's *The Medium* starring Maureen Forrester. Woody Allen used his CD *Music from Berlin in the 1920s* as background music for his film *Shadows and Fog*. He is a recipient of Honorary Doctorates from the University of Waterloo and Wilfrid Laurier University, and the Golden Jubilee Medal of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. In 1989 he was invested into the Order of Canada.

Raffi Armenian has long been active as a pedagogue. In 1981 he became a Professor of the Orchestral Conducting Class in addition to conducting the Orchestra at the Conservatoire de Musique in Montreal, a position he continues to hold. In 1997 he accepted a two-year post as Visiting Guest Professor at the Hochschule für Musik und Darstellende Kunst, in Graz, Austria, and since September 1999 Mr. Armenian has been Director of Orchestral Studies at the University of Toronto.

Concert saxophonist **Tristan De Borba** is a fourth year student pursuing a Bachelor of Music degree in Performance at the University of Toronto Faculty of Music. A three-time scholarship winner at the university, Tristan currently studies saxophone with Wallace Halladay. Tristan's past teachers have included Rob Carli and Daniel Rubinoff. He has also studied in masterclass with Nobuya Sugawa, Julia Nolan and Jean-Francois Guay and has performed under the baton of Raffi Armenian, Gillian Mackay, Jeffrey Reynolds, Alain Trudel and Peter Oundjian. An equally adept performer of classical and contemporary repertoire, Tristan De Borba has performed solo works by Berio, Desenclos, Glazounov and Husa and has performed as an orchestral saxophonist with the University of Toronto Symphony Orchestra and the Toronto Symphony Youth Orchestra. An orchestral concerto competition winner at the University of Toronto in 2006, Tristan has also been invited to perform the Glazounov Saxophone Concerto with the Etobicoke Philharmonic Orchestra in February of 2007. Tristan De Borba currently teaches saxophone and clarinet at Cardinal Carter Academy for the Arts and after completing his degree at the University of Toronto aspires to pursue graduate studies in saxophone performance.



Upcoming concert featuring the University of Toronto Symphony Orchestra

Friday, February 2, 2007

Raffi Armenian, conductor

Dvořák: Othello Overture

Sibelius: Violin Concerto (Jennifer Banks, solo)

Schumann: Symphony No. 1

7:30 pm. MacMillan Theatre. \$18, \$10 senior/student

University of Toronto Symphony Orchestra

Violin I

Hannah (Myung Sik) Min,
concertmaster
Alexandra Labinska,
assistant concertmaster
Sarah Davidson-Gurney
Mark Johnston
Joyce Kim
Luri Lee
Jane Levitt
Takayo Noguchi
Livia Papadimitri
Sandra Wu
Jane Yang

Violin II

Kenin McKay, *principal*
Matthew Chan
Mohamed-Aly Farag
Michelle Lee
Aviva Lufer
Markus Medri
Natasha Rollings
Emma Vachon-Tweney
Monica Westerholm
Alexa Wilks

Viola

Mohsin Bhujwalla,
principal
Samson Chan
Gene Chen
Louisa Cornacchia
John Ng
Eve Tang
Sarah Torrance

Cello

Hannah Kim, *principal*
Andrew Ascenzo
Claire Burrows
Steven Po-Tse Chen
Jason Cho
Cydney Grogan
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Jacques
Sarah Steeves
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Calvin Marks, *principal*
Deirdre Bryant
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Callum Jennings
Brian Kobayakawa
Alexander Kotyk
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Ben Whiteley

Flute

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Christy Germscheid
Daniel Grains
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Lissa Mangano

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Nina Penner
Peter Pinteric

Bass Clarinet

Julia Stroud

Alto Saxophone

Tristan De Borja

Bassoon

Lance McMillan
Krista Wodelet

Contrabassoon

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